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THE

# LABOUR DISPUTE IN KENT.

BY

IOTA.

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“LABOUR IS HONOURABLE,  
IDLENESS IS DETESTABLE.”

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"Labour is honourable,  
Idleness is detestable."

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THE prominence given to the Agricultural Labourers' Strike in Kent by a considerable portion of the Metropolitan papers, has invested it with an importance far in excess of its actual extent and proportions, as affecting agricultural operations : The Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union contains about 15,000 members: it is doubtful whether at any time 500 men have been receiving pay from the Society: Agriculture in the two counties during the last few weeks has been in its normal state, and while some local centres have been agitated, and the scene of angry and spirited disputes, the preparations for Christmas beasts, and tilling the ground for the usual crops, have been uninterrupted.

The movement in favour of reduction by the farmers was rather hurriedly initiated. A small number held a meeting and announced their determination to the labourers: others followed, and at the same time naturally enough the labourers, almost without exception, in the local lodges declared that this was "pinching the women and children" for the luxuries of their employers, and the proposal, in the face of the falling market,

was to be resisted; the public was to be appealed to for aid for these poor creatures; philanthropists, members of parliament, and others, perhaps least of all competent to pass judgment on farmers, were to come to the rescue; a procession of men to London, "destitute and evicted," was to be organized; and with the aid of meetings at Woolwich, Maidstone, and Exeter Hall, a great moral victory was to be achieved over the tyrannical despots who were grinding down these poor slaves—the wretched examples of Shelley's modern "men of England." The banners and the procession of men through the streets of the metropolis did not evoke that degree of compassion in the minds of the members of the Metropolitan Trade Societies so as to draw largely from their funds; they were too astute for the sensational nature of the appeals made to them. Though unfamiliar with agriculture, they must have felt the case was overdrawn and exaggerated. To those with a knowledge of the real state of the case, the only one aspect of the parade was the ridiculous. One inscription borne aloft, to anyone acquainted with the process of hop-drying, was certainly amusing: "Although we dry the hops, we mustn't drink the beer." A gallon of ale and as much small beer as they can drink in the twenty-four hours is the common allowance for many driers, and as much as two gallons of porter in the same time has been quoted by one of the notable Maidstone hop-growers. The great majority of the men have regarded all this demonstration as pure folly and ostentation.

Though they read of the proceedings of Messrs. Herbert and O'Donnell, in their sleeves they half laugh and half condemn the men who went to London. Rumours have reached them that they stood looking half foolish, half tipsy on the platform, and that they would have gladly exchanged so obnoxious a task as turning a mixen for the experiences of the "morning after" in Fleet Street and the Strand.

It is often difficult to analyze men's minds, but they are usually full of inconsistency and paradox. There appears to be no exception in the present instance. Nothing would induce them to reveal to outsiders the precise grounds which induce them to give the Union their support; but of sincere attachment to their masters, there is equally no doubt. Though the magnetism of the Union is powerful, they still entertain a secret, indefinite feeling that it is deluding and beguiling them. They at once regard their superiors with dislike and are ready to idolise them in the same breath: they will attend the Union meeting and listen to the denunciations of the employers with grim satisfaction, and then cheer them to the echo when regaled at Christmas or the Harvest Home, with beef and pudding. Amongst the farmers an almost similar state of things is noticeable. They entertain undisguised sentiments of repugnance towards the Union; they desire also to recognize the inevitable and to scratch along as they may best, under adverse circumstances, while they also are not as a rule

wanting in kindness to their labourers. If the reduction of wages, however, was hurriedly initiated, no other course was open to the tenant farmers. They have been in many cases rightly and justly supported by the landlords, while it can also be recorded, to the credit of the labourers, that though they belonged to the Union, they acted in opposition to the resolutions passed in the local committees, and understood fast enough that with wages at 15s. a week and wheat at 38s. to 45s. a quarter, they were no worse off than when the price of wheat was at 50s. to 60s. and their weekly wages at 16s. in previous instances.

The labourer is entitled to sympathy: he has a hard struggle for life; his tastes are domestic, in no sense vicious, and those who live in the rural districts of England can readily testify to their virtues, struggling as they often do with great hardships and severe privations. To particularise a little: Some parts of the county of Kent, tracts between Folkestone and Dover, or again near Canterbury and the long woods leading away to Ashford and Maidstone, where the soil is sour, the neighbourhood desolate: in these districts there is a poverty-stricken population; the habitations are often miserable; till within very recent days there were no means of education, and in many places are to be seen signs of distress and misery. "*Prima facie*" reduction to the inhabitants of such as these, except under the direst necessity, seems downright cruelty. These, however, are not the class under whose

auspices the strike was either commenced or continued; they were mainly in the hop and market garden villages, near country gentlemen's houses and residences, where, through the summer, they had enjoyed considerable advantages. It must not be supposed in saying this, that these people are merely selfish and wilful—they are victims of misguided impulse. The worst to be urged against them is that ignorance deprives them entirely both of judgment and of reason. Their generosity is as surprising as their incapability of deciding the balance which must determine the fair share of remuneration for their labour due to them. When, according to their own statements, they are almost starving, their purses at once fly open for others in misery and suffering.

That they often act generously to others in distress or difficulties, I give an illustration of charitable aid contributed largely by labourers. I have subjoined a tabulated statement of an offertory summarised for six years in one of these parishes, which is fairly representative, in which the population does not exceed 150 persons. It proves that they are not all quite the unfortunate and destitute persons they have occasionally been represented.

Year.		Amount of Offertory.	Number of			
			£	s.	d.	Coins in each year less than 1s.
1873	..	95 18 10	..			849
1874	..	82 2 4½	..			723
1875	..	73 16 8	..			
1876	..	78 0 9½	..			980
1877	..	103 6 6½	..			830
1878	..	89 7 3	..			881

It is a fact that in many cases the men, with their wives and children, have earned an average of from 18*s.* to 25*s.* a week, and there is an individual case known where a labourer earned as much as £80, with his wife, from Michaelmas 1877 to the same period in 1878. Not long since, passing near a farmer's house, the farmer and his son were observed feeding their sheep; the farmer remarked, in reply to "Good morning," "Well, Sir, you see I am obliged to turn shepherd myself. My shepherd is on strike. How much do you suppose he has earned with his wife, in the last twelve months? I have been going over my books, and I see their average through the year has been 33*s.*" These are instances. But there are many others which could be readily verified, and confute the misleading statements—such, for instance, that weekly wages are being dragged down to 11*s.* or 12*s.* It is a grave and astonishing error for men to strike under such circumstances; but there is nothing in it very unusual; all familiar with industrial disputes know the men never strike when in positive degradation; it is the first beginning and paring down of the wages which is the hardest struggle. These disputes arise not between men and masters where they feel that as the case may be either in wealth or poverty their interests are identical, but at that particular point where both are in a degree of affluence which is ascribed to selfishness or motive, and both are at cross purposes.

But was the course taken inevitable for the farmers? There can be little doubt that it was inevitable. There are few farmers who have found agriculture profitable in the last three years—hop growers, perhaps, alone excepted—and the last year was unfavourable even for these. We are in the day of adversity becoming gradually a more sober people, in proof of which witness the consumption of spirits and of beer, as shown by the revenue returns now, and in the inflated times of 1873 and 1872. On light lands in the recent years farmers have been losing money, and many have had a severe struggle, if not actually with hunger at least with penury.

There can have been no libel more unjust than to brand the farmers as a body with selfish habits or luxurious tastes; writing to the *Times*, not long since, a correspondent quoted the following verses in proof that a great change in the farmers habits had of late years taken place:—

Father to the plough,  
Mother to the cow,  
Daughter to the sow,  
Son go and mow.

Now, however, instead, it was—

Father Tally ho,  
Mother piano,  
Daughter silk and satin,  
Son Greek and Latin.

Of course, as in every profession, there may be some farmers whose lives may be fast and whose pursuits

are amusements rather than business. There are greater facilities than formerly for periodical visits to the Metropolis, for closer acquaintance with the Music Halls and Theatres, for trips to the Derby, Goodwood, or Ascot; but to say the farmers as a class are pleasure-seekers is libellous. A farmer rises early, and after superintending his men and directing their work, in nine cases out of ten goes to work with them himself. In his leisure moments he overlooks his accounts and books—of late years to farmers a very unenviable task; many employ their leisure in the public service as parochial guardians, waywardens, or small parish officers. There is the simple charm of rural life; but a farmer's, and especially a small farmer's, existence during the last few years has been so full of want of confidence and anxiety, that many would gladly exchange their frugal life and uncertain incomes for the fixed wages of the class by whom the land is brought actually under tillage.

The farmers should do more to identify their feelings with those of the labourers. It is hard for a rich man to understand the feelings of a poor one; such is the case not merely between the very rich and the very poor, but also in every phase of social life. There has, perhaps, been amongst some of the labouring poor a drifting towards socialism. They are incapable of appreciating nice distinctions of rights and property, the attributes of every civilized community; we see a restless "*penchant*" for more equality. It has been encouraged by a great deal of legislation in all industrial undertakings on the

part of the State, and a restless desire to advocate more assistance from the State, to the detriment of the great principles of self-help. Hardly anyone can wonder at it. Of late years there has been an ever-widening chasm in the gulph which separates the rich and poor—on the one side, purple and fine linen; on the other, straw, rags and sacking. Again, daily and more frequent libations of champagne and turtle, contrasted with jorums of skim milk with lumps of bacon swimming in them—on the one side greater privations, and on the other greater luxuries, with supposed panaceas to be found in Acts of Parliament.

But, together with this, it is to be regretted that the advance of science and the general progress of the last fifty years, has made little impression upon the labourer. Nothing has been more odious to them than the introduction of machinery into agriculture, and in some places the machines are still looked upon as enemies. “This ‘ere machine,” not seven years ago observed a labourer to the present writer, “is taking the bread out of our mouths.” And in all similar questions—the laws of rent, the first principles of supply and demand—the labourer’s mind is in a condition of impenetrable darkness. Some still maintain the landlords are at fault, and point to munificent benefactors, who on the rent days have remitted the tenants 10 per cent., and observe, “landlords must live at lower rents.” But is it fair that there should go forth a decree that landlords are to be arbitrarily taxed, when the merits of each owner may

be extremely different? There still exists in Kent a yeoman class, unhappily becoming less, and what to a great landlord may be a flea-bite or matter of indifference in such cases, may become the deprivation of the education of some child, or some one equally in need of assistance. Reduced rents must be a private negotiation, but to apply a screw of public opinion extorted by those often the least competent to form one, merits the sternest reprobation. Any landlord if he desires to be just, ought to make allowances to a tenant, reduced by misfortune, accident, and distress, and try to give effect to the principles of "live and let live," on which alone all classes can obtain an adequate competence. The farmers have made a great mistake in attributing all their troubles to the Unions, and in not discerning that nothing more than the old vice, Idleness, lies at the root of all the clamour for short hours and high wages. Some have carried things to such lengths, as actually to decline employing a labourer upon the Union books, and have thus encouraged the leaders of the Unions to make their parishes and farms the centre of the most lamented disputes, and the gulf which yawns between the two, is not even bridged over, but becomes wider and wider. On both sides are engendered angry altercations and hostile remarks, which gradually dissociate the links of the chain by which the interests of the landlord, tenant, and labourers are absolutely bound up and cemented.

It is a great pity that they have not done more towards developing the resources of the land which they have cultivated. There may be a controversy as to large or small holdings, but farmers have done next to nothing to develope the system of mixed farming combining "la grande" with "la petite culture," for which the French peasantry have shown such great aptitude. No essential difference exists in the character of much of the soil on either side of the Channel, between France and England, but in the process of food-production small sources of supply have been much neglected. The Kent plough fairly represents the standard of their opinions, and no amount of argument or persuasion will persuade them to walk out of the beaten track marked out by their predecessors. Any one may read with advantage Mr. Mill's chapter, in his "Political Economy," on Peasant Proprietors. To this system of land tenure there may be many objections, but the system of culture as described in Rhenish Germany, Belgium, France, and the Channel Islands, might have a trial on the soil of Kentish landlords. There is in the town of Deal a considerable factory for the preservation of tinned vegetables and fruit. A large trade is carried on within a limited area and at no great cost. Why should not such undertakings in conjunction with farm enterprises be further developed? The minds of the labourers have been kept in a low state of ignorance by the want of energy and slowness of the employers, and without some attempt to encourage the natural

fertility of the soil, both will flounder in the shifting quicksands of the labour difficulties. Nothing can be more prejudicial to many, than what may be termed their traditional habits of living. The same objection applies equally in the cases of the men, the horses, and the cattle. The great idea has not been bone, fibre, and muscle, but how to get the biggest belly full. Would that some one would persuade the farmers of Kent that oatmeal is a more wholesome diet than lumps of fat pork, and that no real strength is given to horses by feeding them off chopped straw in the middle of the night.

We feel, however, bound to say that these small improvements, though likely in the aggregate to produce large benefits, must be followed up by legislation calculated to give due security to the tenant farmer's capital. This may be done in two ways. The more natural and obvious method is that adopted by the present Government of allowing compensation for improvements; but alas! that Act has proved a dead letter, because, scared by the phantom of freedom of contract, its framers feared to introduce the word "compulsion" into any of its working clauses. It remains, and will remain, a dead letter, a laughing stock, in its present form.

But if we grant (for the sake of argument) that there is force in the Government objection, and that it is unjust to compel a landlord to make a bargain which he dislikes and may not be able to fulfil, we then assert, it is absolutely necessary to give him, under all circumstances, the legal power voluntarily

to part with land to which he is unable to do justice. It is asserted that if estates are not thus kept by long entails together, the old families would soon die out. We hope and believe the simple effect of such an enactment would be, to make them look better after their affairs, and place their families in a position of greater affluence. A capital of £100,000 laid out in land represents an income of £2,500 a-year—in money, £4,000. It is surely hard upon the possessor of land to force him to retain his estate for the sake of aristocratic pretensions, when he might be parting with it to a richer man—benefit first himself and his family ; secondly, the tenant farmer, who, under present arrangements, has to put up with bad buildings, or to do without improvements necessary to enable him to carry on the business ; thirdly, the labourer, who is deprived of those augmented wages which always accompany improved cultivation and agricultural skill.

Also there has been the terrible opposition which public opinion is gradually overcoming against all *learning*. The farmers have faintly abused education, and have often striven insidiously to thwart its ends on every possible occasion ; they have consented reluctantly to half measures ; the result of this has been that usually the children of the poor have only got a smattering—so often the worse form of ignorance ; this would not have been their lot had the movement in favour of schools been met with downright antagonism. The children are often unduly

pressed, their instruction scamped, the earnings of the family diminished, and a system inaugurated which is preparing the way for future difficulties.

The last nostrum to remove depression, one in favour of which signs of the times are not wanting, is an attempted effort to revive the idol of protection. Free Trade has conferred so many blessings on every nook and corner of this land, that movements condemnatory of Free Trade are not openly attempted, but are masked by an insidious guise of false pretences. As a single illustration, at a meeting held on the 28th of November, to consider agricultural depression, at Maidstone, under the presidency of Lord Holmesdale, Mr. Norton proposed the following resolution:—"That this meeting, viewing with apprehension the general depression of agriculture and commerce through the country, and being of opinion that this depression is largely caused by the protective tariff adopted in foreign countries, considers the time has arrived when, in fairness to British interests, the duties levied on foreign produce should be revised." If many movements like this are initiated or continued, no matter how exalted the promoters, class alienation and class rivalries must be as industriously promoted; commercial interests, instead of being united, will become more and more divergent and disconnected. These meetings are significant of feelings which cannot be seriously meant. Free Trade, as part of our public policy, is immutably fixed. Once having gone for-

ward, we shall never return to the false principles of the past.

If the farmers have done wrong in supposing Unions to be the source of all their difficulties, equally are the men foolish and blameable for regarding these combinations as a dawn of day for their fortunes, and the promoters as their saviours. Much can be said in extenuation of the system of Trades Unions. It is necessary that men of the same habits and thoughts should coalesce to discuss their individual interests, and in case of injustice that they should act and work together. The faults of selfishness should not be more ascribed to them, than to the rich and miserly capitalist, only absorbed in the accumulation of worldly possessions; but it is painful to see how often the labourer is led astray by a mere stranger who pleads his case in the newspapers; to "*keep up collections every meeting night*" is the main feature in his manifestoes; while men are neglected, who at their doors have often spent time, money, and energy in striving to improve the condition of their poorer neighbours.

With no desire to impute mismanagement, there can be no doubt that the Statements of the Union finances may be severely criticised. Those for 1876-1877 are here appended.

## KENT AND SUSSEX LABOURERS' UNION.

*Balance-Sheet for Twelvemonths, from April 15, 1876, to April, 1877.*

## RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
Balance, April 15, 1876 . . . . .	3317	15	3
Interest on ditto . . . . .	70	0	10
Donations, as acknowledged weekly in "Kent and Sussex Times" . . . . .	14	5	6
Amounts received from Branches—being fort- nightly contributions, entrance fees, fines, &c., as per list marked "A" . . . . .	4761	8	8
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	£8163	10	3

## EXPENDITURE.

Stamps, post cards, stamped wrappers, &c. . . . .	30	0	8
Parcels to Branches by trains, carriers, &c. . . . .	30	13	7
Expenses of two Delegate Meetings (April and October, 1876) . . . . .	138	15	9
Cost of members' cards . . . . .	17	10	6
Assistance to locked-out men and members discharged by reason of their connection with the Union, &c. . . . .	885	19	9
Expenses of Executive Committee meetings . . . . .	56	18	3
Reports of delegate meetings and Union balance sheets . . . . .	15	11	9
Assistance to members migrating . . . . .	126	4	0
Salaries—Central Office . . . . .	145	16	6
,, Delegates (H. Howard, £47. 16s. 3d.; G. Neame, £47. 16s. 3d.) . . . . .	95	12	6
Delegates' travelling expenses (H. Howard, £39. 19s. 11d.; G. Neame, £15. 0s. 9d.). . . . .	45	0	8
Telegrams . . . . .	1	4	1
Contribution books and cash books for Branches and stationery and printing supplied for use of Branches . . . . .	38	18	3

	£	s.	d.
Stationery for Central Office . . . . .	18	9	9
Post-office orders, cheques, and registered letters . . . . .	14	18	0
Assistance to members emigrating . . . . .	24	5	0
General printing . . . . .	61	9	3
Parcels of various newspapers . . . . .	12	0	5
Advertisements in newspapers . . . . .	3	4	6
Legal expenses incurred in protecting members of the Union . . . . .	30	15	4
Trustees' and Treasurers' expenses . . . . .	1	1	6
Audit expenses . . . . .	6	0	11
Contribution to Newcastle Trades' Congress . . . . .	0	10	0
Expenses of delegate attending Newcastle Trades' Congress . . . . .	7	10	0
Costs attending the holding of public meetings, &c., in connection with the Union, including hire of rooms, railway fares, &c. . . . .	64	2	5
Contribution to Maidstone Trades' Council . . . . .	2	4	2
,, Rochester and Chatham ditto . . . . .	5	0	0
,, Gravesend ditto . . . . .	0	10	0
Rent of Central Office . . . . .	13	0	0
Balance of <i>amount devoted to Newspaper Fund</i> . . . . .	240	0	0
Ledgers for Central Office use . . . . .	1	2	0
Printing revised rules . . . . .	16	0	0
Donations to Dartford silk-weavers . . . . .	5	0	0
Special assistance to needy members of the Union . . . . .	39	7	6
Union almanacs (by resolution of delegate meeting) . . . . .	15	0	0
Fixtures for Central Office . . . . .	9	0	9
Expenses of series of mass meetings on County Franchise . . . . .	69	1	11
Expenses of County Franchise petition to Parlia- ment . . . . .	8	9	4
Donation to Mr. Odger's Widow Annuity Fund . . . . .	10	0	6
Expenses attending action to prevent employment of soldiers in harvest fields . . . . .	3	2	6
Cost of prosecuting Petham Secretary for defraud- ing the Union . . . . .	4	14	7
Purchase of plot of land for member to remove his own cottage to (to be repaid the Union) . . . . .	54	18	2

	£	s.	d.
Legal fees paid in continuation of action in Sheppy assault case . . . . .	25	0	0
Numerous small items . . . . .	38	16	9
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	2433	1	0
	<hr/>		
Balance in favour of Union . . . . .	5730	9	3
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	£8163	10	3

Examined and found correct,

CHARLES STEVENS,  
ALFRED E. HICKMOTT,  
THOS. H. CANDY, B.D.

### BALANCE-SHEET OF THE "UNION LAND AND COTTAGE FUND,"

*From April, 1876, to April 1877.*

#### RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
Balance last audit . . . . .	138	15	4
Share subscriptions received from members . . . . .	535	12	3
Repayment on Lenham Heath appropriation . . . . .	2	0	0
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	£677	7	7

#### EXPENDITURE.

##### Appropriations—

Edward Wells and others, Lenham Heath . . . . .	200	0	0
John Poole, Headcorn (this being the Frant appropriation, obtained by John Poole by purchase) . . . . .	200	0	0
Expenses attending three Branch ballot meetings .	1	5	6
Printing . . . . .	3	13	1
Postage . . . . .	3	5	0
Office assistance . . . . .	19	10	0
Stationery for Central Office . . . . .	2	12	0
Members' Cards (proportion of) . . . . .	4	10	0
Rules . . . . .	1	10	0

	£	s.	d.
Contribution Books (proportion of)	.	.	1 10 0
Committee meetings	,,	,,	5 5 0
Delegate meetings	,,	,,	10 0 0
Audit expenses	,,	,,	1 0 0
			<hr/>
	454	0	7
Balance in hand	.	.	223 7 0
			<hr/>
	£677	7	7

Liability—£100 upon Wainscott Branch Appropriation.

Examined and found correct,

CHARLES STEVENS,  
ALFRED E. HICKMOTT,  
THOS. H. CANDY, B.D.

#### KENT AND SUSSEX LABOURERS' UNION SICK AND FUNERAL FUND.

*Balance-Sheet from April 15th, 1876, to April 9th, 1877.*

##### RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
Balance, April 15, 1876	.	.	2313 9 11
Interest on ditto	.	.	57 9 8
Amounts of Contributions, Entrance Fees, and Fines, received from Branches, as per list sent to Branches marked "B"	.	.	6427 3 5
Donations	.	.	1 7 4
Balance remaining from "The late Treasurer's Stupidity Fund"	.	.	4 11 1
			<hr/>
	£8804	1	5

##### EXPENDITURE.

Amounts paid to sick members, as per table sent to Branches	.	.	4519 13 11
Paid to fathers of Branches, as per table	.	.	121 0 4
Death allowances (57 members)	.	.	563 7 6
Death allowances (29 members' wives)	.	.	116 0 0
Members' wives' confinement allowances	.	.	434 0 0

Examined and found correct,

CHARLES STEVENS,  
ALFRED E. HICKMOTT,  
THOS. H. CANDY, B.D.

Looking over these balance-sheets, the items may be open to objection in a few details, but as they appear they are a perfectly legitimate way of disbursing the Society's Funds. There is, however, no capital account, and there is nothing to show that the Secretary receives anything for the trouble of

management and other services. In matters of business, experience is not favourable to unpaid agents; and it would in no way diminish confidence in their Secretary and his coadjutors, could it be shown conclusively to the labourers, that they help those who help them, with the pecuniary assistance to which they have a strong moral, as well as legal claim. One of the Auditors appears to have taken part in the business proceedings of adopting the report, and another, in favour of the franchise which immediately followed. Without casting the smallest imputation upon the accuracy or competence of the Auditors, might it not be well for all parties that the accounts of a body of this character should be audited and tabulated by gentlemen, one way or another, quite independent, and outside the controversies which have developed in connection with the labour difficulties.

It is a mistake to mix up sick benefit with the purposes of trade organizations. According to the rules of the Kent and Sussex Labourers' Union, the Executive are the body to whom the widest powers are entrusted; they can do anything with regard to the management of the Society's finances. According to Rule 19, it is determined—"That whenever a dispute arises as to wages or hours of labour, an effort shall be made to settle such dispute by arbitration. The Executive Committee shall have power to take charge of all such disputes between employers and labourers, to make

arrangements for supporting members when out of employment in consequence of a demand made by the Union, or by reason of a member obeying the Rules of the Union, to fine not exceeding 21s., suspend or expel any member who may violate the Rules of the Union, and shall also possess such other powers as may be requisite to accomplish the objects of the members." It was reported that those who accepted the reduction in spite of the resolutions to the contrary; the Union Committees had passed, were to be adjudicated upon in accordance with this rule, and according to the decision of the Executive these defaulting members were to be suspended from the advantage of such pay for three, six, or twelve months, should they become entitled to it, according to circumstances. This, however, so far as is known, has not been carried into effect, for the simple reason that the largest proportion of men belonging to the Union have consented to be reduced, and so arbitrary a proceeding might have led into the splitting up of the Society's ranks. But that such a power should be even put in question is a warning that Trades' Unions are not the best Banks in which the labouring classes should invest their savings.

It would be far better were the labourers to place themselves beyond the reach of these complications and annoyances, by belonging to the Foresters, Odd Fellows, or County Friendly Societies, whose fame is established, whose credit is unquestioned, and who have never been intermingled with this higgling over

wages. Much also remains to be done by increasing facilities for the appointment of agents in each parish for Post Office Savings Banks at such hours as the working classes may find most convenient for making their deposits, and by the establishment of Penny Banks in connection with National Schools, to encourage habits of saving. It would also be well could the meetings in public-houses be discontinued, as these seem of all places the most fertile sources of crime and pauperism amongst the labouring classes.

Emigration is advocated. To look before you leap is common-place advice, but before they leave this country it is to be hoped they will fully understand what they will obtain by quitting it. There can be no greater delusion than to suppose that a man landed in a colony will be the better off for a large free grant of land; it is only when the scheme of Colonial emigration is systematised and conducted under men of sagacity, experience, enterprise, and above all personal knowledge of the social conditions of the country to which the colonists set forth, that an exchange to better things abroad for penurious life in the land of their birth may be expected by English labourers.

One more word in conclusion. The men are often ignorant. They are suspicious of their employers, sometimes of men who have lived in their parishes or counties almost for generations. Ignorance begets suspicion and this again jealousy. Can nothing be done to overrule these passions? It needs a stronger

effort to rule the spirit than to take the city. The man who approaches these subjects in a true spirit of self-control and humility, has a harder struggle than the private who hurls himself against the fortresses of the enemy, ever ready to surrender his life for the service of his country in foreign lands. But together with this suspicion and perhaps jealousy there is one feature in the labourer's thoughts in direct antagonism to these feelings; they have the most unlimited credulity in their own press, and nearly everything that appears in its pages is readily swallowed up and believed by its hungry readers. A free press is one of our greatest privileges. National gratitude is due to those who removed the taxes upon knowledge. But it is to be most earnestly hoped that implicit faith in, and the infallibility of their own organ, is not to be a future dogma of the labourers. £240 is the balance of the amount to their press fund and appears last year as one of the items of the Society's expenses. It is a serious question sometimes whether the Press is not becoming a fourth state of the realm, and whether its gigantic and tremendous powers are discreetly exercised, when for purely party purposes direct encouragement is given to thoughts which may too easily lead to violence and bloodshed. To descend to a smaller area, has an exclusive organ, in which they read only what is acceptable to their passing feelings, been an advantage to the labourers?

Time alone will show how far they have been

following their own convictions; one matter shows improvement, namely, that beyond words no signs of violence have been manifested to the employers.

There has been no crime, no machine-breaking, no outrage, nothing beyond hard words and "hair-brained chatteringings." In time hard necessity will bring home to the labourers the impossibility of combinations to raise wages. The sun is just as likely to move backwards. If the real truth were known, it was a belief that such *was* the power, and that it *will* still be a power, is the secret reason of the circumstances under which the movement known as the Labourers' Union originated. It is far more likely that the labourers have been led astray by such notions than by men known as agitators, whose motives, unless proof can be adduced to the contrary, should be respected. Combinations to keep down wages will break down; equally those which strive to raise them to an artificial standard. It would be well could both parties understand that profit and loss, rent and wages, are all settled by laws outside these controversies. They would all be the better for reading Dean Dawes' simple lessons in "The Phenomena of Industrial Life, and its Conditions of Success," in which, after speaking of the utter failure of strikes and lock-outs to increase wages or profits, he truly states, that "neighbourly feeling, mutual sympathy and attachment, and all the kindlier impulses of our nature, coincide with intelligence in recommending

the avoidance and discontinuance of efforts such as these, fraught as they must ever be with bitterness, disappointment, and misery. In exploring the conditions of agricultural success, and tracing them through all the complications in which at times they may seem involved, there are certain great facts of which we should never lose sight. The average share of wealth falling to each member of society is determined by the quantity of wealth divisible amongst all the members. Where that average share is insufficient for well-being, no relief for the present is to be found except in resignation and kind consideration for the wants of others; nor for the future, except in improved industrial capacity to produce more than is consumed. The increase of production will be distributed amongst capitalists and labourers, and the reward of each will be in proportion to the efficacy with which he contributes to the general good. Let, then, two means of amelioration be resolutely arrived at—resignation to the present privation, which is unavoidable, and a stern resolution to observe and act up to the condition of industrial success—so that there may be less call for resignation in the future. After a few years of such thoughts and conduct, there will be little temptation and less disposition to engage in combinations, strikes, and lock-outs."

*December 31st, 1878.*







